

VETERANS CONNECTIONS

News from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ Volume 2, Issue 12 ★ March 2023



★ Message from IDVA Director Terry Prince

Throughout the month of March, we have recognized TEAM IDVA's social workers, registered dietitians, and long-term care administrators through national days set aside to celebrate their contributions. When I refer to Team IDVA, I mean exactly that – our team! Especially in the residential homes, a place where we look after nearly all the residents' needs therefore, each employees' contribution is critical. Together, they tend to the medical, personal, and emotional well-being of Veterans in our care. Bottom line, even though there are specific recognition weeks, we thank them year-round for the skills, dedication, and professionalism they bring to their work.

From Central Office, it has been a busy month. We welcomed a new Chief Fiscal Officer Stephanie Heckencamp. Even after a few weeks, her contribution to our fiscal team is evident. Meet Steph on page 6.

We have been preparing for our House and Senate budget hearings where we are advocating for additional resources so we can better serve Illinois Veterans. Additionally, the IDVA website was shifted to a new platform which has made it even easier to navigate. Take a look here: <https://veterans.illinois.gov/>.

Thank you for staying connected to IDVA.

Sincerely,
Terry Prince
IDVA Director



PURPLE UP DAY!

Wednesday, April 12th

Join Team IDVA in thanking children of military families for their service and sacrifice to our nation by wearing Purple.

Take a photo of you or of your team and submit to Maureen Hartigan, maureen.hartigan@illinois.gov, for use on social media and the IDVA newsletter Veterans Connections. (a consent form will be requested if not already on file).



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Monthly Highlights



Operation Desert Storm Anniversary



Lt. Colonel (Ret) Renysha Brown delivers the keynote address.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs commemorated the 32nd anniversary of the Operation Desert Storm Cease-Fire on Tuesday, February 28th at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield.

Operation Desert Storm began in 1991 after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion and occupation of Kuwait and refused commands by the United Nations Security Council to withdraw. It began with an aggressive air offensive led by the United States Air Force. 540,000 United States personnel made up the 750,000 coalition forces from countries including Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. After 42 days, President George H.W. Bush declared a cease-fire on February 28th; most Iraqi forces in Kuwait had either surrendered or fled.

The keynote address was delivered by Lt. Colonel (Ret) Renysha Brown, Acting Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit.



Illinois Military Museum Reenactor Don Ferricks.

Social Workers Month

This March, we celebrated IDVA's social workers as part of Social Workers Month. This year's theme is "Breaking Barriers," where IDVA social workers excel. Their work supports the care we provide Veterans by looking out for their interests and their unique needs. We realize that this takes training, listening, and intuition. By listening to the Veterans, the social worker is instrumental in finding solutions to make life easier and more enjoyable. They are also the liaison with the Veterans' family, which is so important in connecting and understanding the needs of the entire family. Thank you for choosing Veterans and for the important part you play in caring for the whole person.



Veterans' Home at Manteno: Anne Riney, Carolyn Domont, Greg Brenneison, April Caffey-Reed



*Veterans' Home at Anna:
Vyta Copeland*



*Veterans' Home at LaSalle:
Sharon Gibson*



Monthly Highlights



Women Veterans Stand Down Event

As part of Women's History Month, we recognized the nearly 50,000 Women Veterans who call Illinois home, through this year's annual Women Veteran's Stand Down hybrid event. At seven locations around the state, women Veterans learned about services and resources available specifically for them. Kourtney Hopkins, IDVA's Women Veterans Coordinator, hosted a site in Springfield, IL.



Registered Dietitians Day

On March 3rd, we recognized Registered Dietitians who look out for the diets and menus of residents in the Veterans' Homes across the state. They have the challenge of factoring in individual nutritional needs to ensure that healthy, tasty, and satisfying meals are provided. Director Prince noted that during his military service, there were times when morale of the crew was directly impacted by the quality and quantity of the food. Military planners place food at the same level as bombs and band aids—it's that important! Wholesome meals are critical to the overall well-being of the Veterans in our care, and we appreciate the skills, creativity, and dedication of our Registered Dietitians.



Veterans' Home at LaSalle Dietary Consultant: Karey Terselic, RD, LDN

Sunshine Cake

Veterans' Home at LaSalle Treat



Ingredients:

Cake

- Yellow Cake Mix (one box)
- 11-ounce can Mandarin Oranges with juice
- 4 Egg Whites
- 20-ounce can Applesauce

Whipped Topping

- Sugar-free instant vanilla pudding
- 8-ounces prepared whipped topping
- 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter and dust a 13 x 9 cake pan.

Cake preparation:

Beat cake mix, mandarin oranges (undrained), egg whites, and applesauce on low speed for 2 minutes.

Pour in prepared cake pan.

Bake according to instructions on cake mix.

Cool cake completely.

Whipped topping preparation

Drain crushed pineapple.

Blend pineapple with vanilla pudding mix and prepared whip topping.

Top cooled cake with whipped topping. May be refrigerated before serving. Serves 12.



Monthly Highlights



Veterans' Home at Anna Dietitian Melissa Campbell: Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition with a specialization in Dietetics from SIUC. Certified Dietary Manager.

Broccoli Salad

A Veterans' Home at Anna Crowd Pleaser

Ingredients:

Salad

- 9 lb. Fresh broccoli (option: ½ broccoli ½ cauliflower)
- 1 ½ lb. cooked and chopped bacon
- 1 ¼ lb. red onion
- 6 oz raisins

Preparation: combine all ingredients in a large bowl.

Dressing

- 1 Qt Mayo
- 5 TB Sugar
- White Vinegar

Preparation: combine all ingredients.

Add the dressing over your broccoli, bacon, onion and raisins, TOSS and let CHILL. Enjoy.

Serves: 50

Corn Chowder

A Veterans' Home at Quincy Favorite



Veterans' Home at Quincy Dietary Team (left to right) : Brenna Zanger RDN LDN CDCES, Janet Llewellyn RDN LDN, and Shelly Watson RDN LDN.

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds Potatoes-diced
- 8 ounces Margarine
- 4 ounces Onions- diced
- 6 ounces Celery-Diced
- 12 ounces Flour
- 1 teaspoon White Pepper
- 3 ounces Chicken Base
- 1.5 gallons Water
- 1 #10 Creamed Corn
- 1 cup Chives
- 2.5 quarts Milk
- 1 pound Bacon-diced

Method

- Sauté onions and celery in margarine until tender.
- Add flour, pepper, and chicken base to the onions.
- Stir until well blended.
- Cook for 5 minutes.
- Add water, stirring constantly.
- Cook until mixture thickens.
- Add corn, chives, and potatoes.
- Heat until hot.
- Stir milk into soup.
- Heat to 180 degrees.
- Cut bacon into 1" pieces, cook and drain well.
- Add bacon to soup just before serving.

Serves 50, 8 ounce servings



Monthly Highlights



*Veteran's Home at Chicago
Ruth Kross, RDN, LD Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Foods and Nutrition. FSSM licensed.*

Employee Appreciation Day

A cookie goes a long way in feeling appreciated. The Blessed Sacrament School in Quincy assembled over 300 bags of cookies and placed them on employees' cars to thank them for their service to Quincy Veterans.



Welcome



Stephanie Heckenkamp Chief Fiscal Officer

As IDVA continues to recruit outstanding people who are dedicated to serving Illinois' Veterans, their families and survivors, Director Prince is proud to announce that **Stephanie Heckenkamp has been hired as the agency's Chief Fiscal Officer**. Prior to joining IDVA, Stephanie served as the Acting CFO at the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board and brings additional state fiscal leadership experience from her time at the Illinois Department of Revenue and Liquor Control Commission. Stephanie has built productive teams, both in state government and in the private sector, and her primary focus will be to lead the Agency's fiscal department assigned to six locations across Illinois. As a member of the executive staff, she will play a major role in the success of the IDVA strategic plan that includes People, Operational Excellence and the Veteran Experience.

Congratulations and Welcome Stephanie Heckenkamp



Chief Fiscal Officer
Illinois Department
of Veterans' Affairs



"Stephanie brings years of extensive experience in the public and private sector which will strengthen our overall fiscal operations," said Director Terry Prince. "She aligns with IDVA's emphasis on the Veterans' experience by going the extra mile and delivering great customer service which will be beneficial to the organization and our state as a whole. We are excited to have her on TEAM IDVA."

Field Services



Veteran Service Officer Michael Willis (middle gray shirt) participates in the Chicago Police Resource Fair at the American Legion on 35th and Damen in Chicago on March 7th.

PACT ACT

Since the PACT Act was signed into law by President Biden last August, it has earned attention among the Veteran community for its expansion of VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. It also has potential to help civilians who may have been exposed to toxins including Camp Lejeune Toxic Water.

While attorneys are available to assist Veterans with claims, earned benefits will be shared with the attorney. To obtain full compensation, IDVA Veteran Service Officers (VSO) and partner County Veterans Assistance Commissions are poised to help Veterans at no cost to the Veteran or reduction of earned benefits. If you are the Veteran, and you are diagnosed with one or more of the recognized presumptive conditions, the claim is not complex. If you meet the associated exposure criteria, and have a diagnosed condition from those criteria, it becomes a question of if you are disabled from it, and if so, how disabled you are as a result of exposure. For assistance, please reach out to your [local VSO](#), or call 217-782-6641 or 800-437-9824 for assistance.

Please check the resources available on the US Department of Veterans Affairs website: [The PACT Act And Your VA Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#).

Health and Wellness

Eat Wisely

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs correlates many of their monthly prevention topics with National Health Observances. This month the focus is on eating wisely. Visit the VA's website at [Eat Wisely - National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention \(va.gov\)](#) to learn more and check out the Move!® Healthy Placemat guidance for helpful tips.

MOVE! MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT—CREATE A HEALTHY PLATE!

Follow the MOVE! Healthy Placement guidance to help reduce your risk of developing diseases such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer.

Non-Starchy Vegetables & Fruits
Fill 1/2 of your plate with non-starchy vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits are full of nutrients and may help to promote good health. Choose red, orange, and dark-green vegetables for added benefits.

Grains & Starchy Vegetables
Make 1/4 of your plate whole grains and/or starchy vegetables. Aim to eat at least half of all grains as whole grains (3 oz. or more daily).

Protein Foods
Make 1/4 of your plate lean protein choices (2-3 ounce cooked portions). Choose protein foods, such as lean beef, pork, venison, chicken, turkey, or eggs as well as seafood, beans, peas, nuts, and tofu.

Dairy Foods
Include fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk and milk products such as yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages for lactose intolerance. Aim for 2-3 servings per day.

Drink more water
Strive for at least 8 cups per day. Drink before and with meals. Don't wait for thirst—sip throughout the day. All fluids count—select water first, then low-calorie, unsweetened beverages.

FOR A HEALTHY LUNCH OR DINNER:
Enjoy your food, but eat less. Use a 9" plate to avoid oversized portions. Make half your plate veggies and fruits. Add lean protein. Include whole grains. Don't forget dairy. Limit extra fat. Enjoy sweet treats in small amounts & not every day. Don't skip meals. Try new foods. Take your time while eating.

PORTION SIZES
1 cup = 1/2 cup = 1 ounce (oz) = 1/4 cup = 1 tablespoon = 1 ounce (oz) = 1/2 ounce (oz) = 1/2 teaspoon = 1/4 ounce (oz) = 1/2 ounce (oz)



Veterans' Homes



Veterans' Home at Manteno's Woodshop is up and running after being closed throughout the pandemic. Great day to get back to work! Pictured: Resident Joe Norz with volunteer Maggie Davis.



Thank you to the Macomb VFW Post 1921 and Harrison's Pub for their support of the Activity Fund at the Illinois Veterans' Home in Quincy. Pictured from left to right of the VFW Post 1921: Holly Yocum, Sara Colgrove (IDVQ Activity Director), Jerry Yocum, and Tom Geise of the Great River Honor Flight.



Quincy resident Margie Rose enjoys Mardi Gras with Hurricane drinks, shrimp, games, mask making projects, and Mardi Gras isn't Mardi Gras without beads!



Veteran's Home at Chicago residents enjoy the Ancient Egypt, Planet Earth, and the Nature exhibits at the Field Museum. Sue, the T-Rex, was a highlight!



Veterans' Home at Manteno resident Raymond Lynch celebrated his 100th birthday. Ray served in the Infantry Division of the US Army during World War II (Feb. 1943 to Sept. 1945). He was awarded the Purple Heart, Silver Star, and Bronze Battle Star medals.



Pictured from left to right of Harrison's Pub: Lance Schuttler, Tammy Hoschar, Cheryl Beebe (Pub owner), Sara Colgrove (Activity Director of IVHQ) and Robin Hessling.

The Illinois State Military Museum

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs has partnered with the Illinois State Military Museum on special events throughout the year including The Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day and the Springfield and DuQuoin State Fairs. The museum's reenactors have enhanced these events by taking us back in time to experience history.

Located in Springfield and overseen by the Illinois National Guard, the Museum exhibits rare artifacts to preserve and showcase the diverse military history of Illinois from its earliest citizen soldiers to the armed forces of today. To tell the story, the museum features reenactments of people dressed in period clothing with items reflective of that time as an interactive experience.

The exhibits include rare items such as the artificial leg of Mexican General Santa Anna, a target board shot at by President Lincoln, as well as vehicles, weapons, uniforms, equipment and photographs. The Citizen-Soldier exhibit features the military experiences of famous Illinois soldiers such as Carl Sandburg, Robert McCormick, John A. Logan and Abraham Lincoln. The museum showcases many items from the Civil War including authentically armed and uniformed soldier.

Illinois Army National Guard, Col. (ret.) Paul Fanning joined the museum as its director after a 32-year military career. In an interview with NPR, he noted that a team of graduate students and volunteers ensure that the museum rotates its collections so that visitors see something new each time they visit the museum.

Admission is free to visit the museum. For more information visit: <https://www.facebook.com/Illinois.State.Military.Museum/>



Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to “Stand Up and Be Counted!” by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you’re helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. Click here to register.

We thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to you.



Illinois Department of
Veterans' Affairs

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